

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (previously amended): A cotton bale handling method comprising:  
supporting the bale of cotton in a bale configuration using protective wrap  
extending around the bale;  
transporting a cotton bale with the protective wrap from a harvest location to a  
cotton gin;  
inserting an upper elongated wrap engaging structure into the bale;  
engaging a lower portion of the protective wrap with a lower wrap engaging  
structure;  
tensioning a lower portion of the protective wrap with the lower wrap engaging  
structure;  
positioning the cotton bale adjacent a receiver, the step of positioning  
including moving the tensioned lower portion of the protective wrap bale in a  
conveying direction against a severing device to facilitate removal of the cotton and  
draping of the protective wrap over the upper elongated wrap engaging structure;  
separating the protective wrap from the cotton while the cotton bale is  
positioned adjacent the receiver; and  
transferring cotton from the bale away from the wrap into the receiver for  
processing by the cotton gin.

Claim 2 (previously amended): The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein  
the step of tensioning includes rotating the lower wrap engaging structure.

Claim 3 (previously amended): The method as set forth in claim 2 wherein  
the step of severing includes supporting a knife structure adjacent the receiver, the  
step of tensioning includes tensioning the wrap adjacent the knife structure, and  
engaging the tensioned wrap and the knife structure to form a single slit in a direction  
corresponding to the conveying direction of motion.

Claim 4 (original): The method as set forth in claim 2 wherein the step of  
severing comprises supporting a knife adjacent an end of the receiver and moving

the wrapped bale over the knife and towards a position over the receptacle so that the cotton falls from the severed wrap into the receiver.

Claim 5 (original): The method as set forth in claim 1 further comprising the step of capturing the protective wrap and preventing the protective wrap from being deposited in the receiver.

Claim 6 (previously amended): The method as set forth in claim 5 including positioning the upper wrap engaging portion under the protective wrap a distance approximately equal to a length of the bale prior to the step of severing.

Claim 7 (original): The method as set forth in claim 5 wherein the step of capturing comprises capturing the protective wrap using differential air pressure.

Claim 8 (original): The method as set forth in claim 5 further comprising transporting the protective wrap away from the receiver through an air duct.

Claim 9 (previously amended): The method as set forth in claim 1 including the step of positioning the wrapped bale on a conveyor to move the bale along a path towards the receiver, the step of separating including supporting a wrap removal structure adjacent the conveyor.

Claim 10 (previously amended): The method as set forth in claim 9 wherein the step of supporting the wrap removal structure comprises supporting cutting structure at a location in the path to sever the protective wrap as the bale moves adjacent the receiver.

Claims 11-20 (Cancelled)

Claim 21 (currently amended): A cotton handling structure comprising:

a protective wrap defining a deformable wrapped cotton bale;

conveying structure for moving the wrapped cotton bale in a first direction relative to a cotton gin receiver, the conveying structure including bale supports, the bale supports including spaced forks supporting a lower portion of the bale, wrap engaging members movably mounted on the spaced forks and selectively movable into engagement with the protective wrap, the spaced forks spreadable to move the engaging members apart to tension an area of the protective wrap between the wrap engaging members;

separating structure located adjacent the receiver for removing the protective

wrap from the cotton bale positioned relative to the receiver, the separating structure including a cutter providing a slit in the tensioned area of the protective wrap in a direction generally parallel to the first direction; and

wrap removal structure preventing removed wrap from being deposited in the receiver.

Claim 22 (currently amended): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 21 wherein the bale supports ~~comprise spreadable forks~~ are movable from a narrowed bale support position for supporting the bale to a widened cotton release position for facilitating release of the cotton to the receiver.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 22 wherein the ~~forks~~ wrap engaging members include claw members rotatable on the bale supports to engage the protective wrap.

Claim 24 (previously amended): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 21 wherein the conveying structure comprises a conveyor for receiving the cotton bale and moving the cotton bale along a path in the first direction towards the receiver.

Claim 25 (original): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 21 wherein the wrap removal structure comprises a source of vacuum capturing a portion of the wrap.

Claim 26 (original): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 22 wherein the wrap removal structure comprises means for engaging the wrap located on the bale handler.

Claim 27 (original): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 26 wherein the means for engaging the wrap comprises an elongated member located above the spreadable supports.

Claim 28 (previously amended): The cotton handling structure as set forth in claim 26 wherein the means for engaging the wrap comprises retractable wrap engaging members located on the forks.